

Soleduck-Hoh Watershed, WRIA 20

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Soleduck-Hoh Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the best strategies for securing water for a future project or proposal in this area.

This watershed consists of the Soleduck, Hoh, Bogachiel and Calaweh Rivers and many additional tributary creeks and streams. Annual precipitation in the Soleduck-Hoh Watershed ranges from 100 inches per year along the coastal lowlands to 180 inches per year in the Olympic Mountains. Most precipitation arrives during the winter months when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

Factors affecting water availability

This watershed has many small farms and exempt domestic well uses. Increased demands from population growth, low summer and early fall streamflow levels, and impacts from climate change add to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 20, especially during the summer months.

The Makah and Quinault Indian Tribes are very concerned about maintaining flows and fish habitat in the watershed and water right applications and mitigation plans are routinely sent to the Tribes for their review.

At the present time, there is no instream flow rule for the Soleduck-Hoh River watershed.

Some areas located near the Pacific Ocean may have the potential for seawater intrusion.

MORE INFORMATION



Definitions

Aquifer: An underground layer of sand and gravel that acts as a reservoir for groundwater.

Instream flows: Flow levels adopted into an administrative rule that create a water right for the stream to protect fish, wildlife, stock watering, recreational uses, and other instream uses and values. Typical instream flow rules now include broader water management strategies.

Mitigation plan: A scientifically-sound plan to offset the impacts of a proposed water use.

Seawater intrusion: The movement of salt water into freshwater aquifers.

Water supply available for new uses

Because of the low stream flows in the summer and early fall when water demand for new development is the highest, there is limited water available for new uses, especially given that river levels need to be maintained to ensure adequate water quality and fish migration. Applicants seeking new water appropriations may need to mitigate for the impacts their use of water will have on surface water bodies.

Connecting to an established water supplier is generally the fastest and simplest way to obtain a new water supply.

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf.

Additional options for finding a water supply include processing a water right application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf. The applicant may need to develop mitigation to offset the impacts of their water use to surface water.

For a more complete look at alternatives for water right application processing, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf.

Pending water right applications in this watershed

Washington water law is based on the “prior appropriation” system, often called “first in time, first in right.” Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html>
- Pending Water Right Applications by County
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html>
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html

- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLSWebMap/default.aspx>

For more information

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Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341*



